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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AM](#)  
SUBJECT: INTERIM CABINET COMPLETED 19 DAYS BEFORE ELECTIONS

REF: A) YEREVAN 356 B) YEREVAN 412

1. (U) President Kocharian appointed Chief of the General Staff Colonel-General Mikayel Harutyunyan to serve as Armenia's interim defense minister on April 24, two weeks after he had appointed the rest of the cabinet. Harutyunyan succeeds former Defense Minister Serzh Sargsian, who became Prime Minister following the March 25 death of Prime Minister Andranik Margarian (reftels). All of the other cabinet members were reappointed earlier, to continue in their previous portfolios on an interim basis until after the election.

2. (U) Harutyunyan is an uncontroversial figure with a long military history and strong ties to Moscow. Before beginning his 12-year stint as the chief of the general staff of the Armenian army, he served at the general staff academy of the Soviet army, teaching officers who would go on to become members of Russia's top military brass. Harutyunyan has served as de facto acting defense minister since Sargsian moved to the Prime Minister's Office on April 4.

3. (SBU) COMMENT: It is unlikely that Harutyunyan will retain the post following the May 12 elections. Press reports naming Seyran Ohanian, minister of defense and chief of the general staff of the "Nagorno Karabakh Republic" as the likely choice, continue to swirl. Former Deputy Defense Minister Artur Aghabekian is also considered a likely candidate. END COMMENT.

4. (U) In addition to Harutyunyan, the members of the government are:

Aghvan Vardanian - Labor and Social Affairs Minister  
Norayr Davidian - Health Minister  
Karen Tshmaritian - Trade and Economic Development Minister,  
David Harutyunian - Justice Minister,  
Vartan Oskanian - Foreign Affairs Minister,  
Vardan Ayvazian - Environment Protection Minister,  
David Lokian - Agriculture Minister,  
Armen Movsisian - Energy Minister,  
Manuk Topuzian - Minister, Chief of Staff of the Cabinet,  
Levon Mkrtchian - Education and Science Minister,  
Hasmik Poghosian - Culture and Youth Affairs Minister,  
Hovik Abrahamian - Minister of Territorial Administration,  
Andranik Manukian - Transport and Communications Minister,  
Aram Harutyunian - Minister of Urban Development,  
Vardan Khachatryan - Minister of Finance and Economy

GODFREY